



# Department of Health

**KATHY HOCHUL**  
Governor

**JAMES V. McDONALD, M.D., M.P.H.**  
Commissioner

**MEGAN E. BALDWIN**  
Acting Executive Deputy Commissioner

**DATE:** July 26, 2023

**TO:** Clinical Laboratories

**FROM:** New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) Wadsworth Center

## UPDATED LABORATORY ADVISORY: Submission of Positive Specimens and Isolates from Enterovirus Specific PCR Assays

- NYSDOH is conducting enhanced surveillance to detect additional polio cases and is requesting immediate assistance with monitoring of additional suspected cases for urgent public health response.
- NYSDOH is requesting that laboratories **hold for submission to NYSDOH Wadsworth Center all clinical specimens and viral isolates** collected from:
  - 1) Individuals who:
    - a. live, work, attend school, or have frequent social interactions with communities in counties in which [poliovirus genetically related to the virus strain from the case-patient has been found](#) (As of the date of release of this advisory, those counties outside of NYC are: **Rockland, Orange, Sullivan, and Nassau.**);  
AND
    - b. are unimmunized, incompletely immunized for polio or have unknown polio immunization status and are suspected to be unimmunized (patient report acceptable if records are not available);  
AND
    - c. are exhibiting mild symptoms consistent with a prodromal stage of polio;  
AND
    - d. test **positive in an enterovirus-specific PCR test.**
  - OR**
  - 2) Individuals who:
    - a. live, work, attend school, or have frequent social interactions with communities in counties outside of NYC in which [poliovirus genetically related to the virus strain from the case-patient has been found](#) (**Rockland, Orange, Sullivan, and Nassau**);  
AND
    - b. have **meningitis with no other apparent cause. Enterovirus testing of CSF may be positive, negative, or not done;**  
AND
    - c. are unimmunized or incompletely immunized for polio or with unknown polio immunization status and suspected to be unimmunized (patient report acceptable if records are not available).
  - OR**
  - 3) Additionally, all **New York State residents**, including NYC, with **acute onset of flaccid paralysis (AFP) or acute flaccid myelitis (AFM)**, regardless of whether enterovirus testing has been conducted or enterovirus result.

- Please hold **all clinical specimens and viral isolates** from individuals in one or more of the groups above, or from individuals otherwise indicated by their clinicians to be at risk for polio, and contact the NYSDOH BCDC during business hours at 518-473-4439 or evenings, weekends, and holidays via [AFM@health.ny.gov](mailto:AFM@health.ny.gov) or [BCDC@health.ny.gov](mailto:BCDC@health.ny.gov)
- NYSDOH will advise on the submission of specimens to NYSDOH Wadsworth Center and regarding the collection of additional specimens (e.g., stool, CSF, serum, and respiratory samples) for testing.
- Providers have been instructed to include the Rockland, Orange, Sullivan, or Nassau County connection and/or polio vaccination status on enterovirus specific PCR test orders submitted to laboratories.

**Wadsworth Center Specimen Submission Information:**

- Specimens that are acceptable for testing at Wadsworth Center include enterovirus-positive: stool (preferable) or oropharyngeal (OP) or nasopharyngeal swabs (NPS) in VTM or UTM for individuals exhibiting mild symptoms consistent with a prodromal stage of polio and stool or OP swabs for individuals with suspect non-paralytic polio-meningitis.
  - For stool samples, a quarter-sized amount of stool should be collected in a sterile, wide-mouth container with no additives. **Stool specimens should be kept cold (i.e., refrigerated or frozen).**
  - For OP/NP swabs, flocked swabs are preferred. Sterile Dacron or rayon swabs with plastic or metal handles may also be used. Do NOT use cotton or calcium alginate swabs or swabs with wooden sticks. Place the swab in liquid viral transport media (VTM) or universal transport media (UTM). The swabs and media used for COVID-19 or influenza PCR testing can be used. Do not use saline or send dry swabs.
  - CSF specimens of 2-3 cc should be collected into a sterile collection tube without additives, frozen promptly to -70/80°C and shipped on dry ice.
  - All other specimens should be stored refrigerated and shipped overnight on frozen gel packs.
- When directed to send, laboratories should send these specimens immediately and not hold specimens for batched shipments.
- **For enhanced surveillance of individuals meeting criteria 1) or 2) above, laboratories should not forward specimens that produce a positive result on a rapid or panel test with a combined enterovirus/rhinovirus target. Such positive specimens should be retested using an enterovirus specific PCR, and only forwarded if the specific test is positive.**
- **Specimens from patients with suspected AFM or AFP (regardless of enterovirus testing) should be sent to NYSDOH Wadsworth Center for AFM testing.**
- A shipping manifest from an electronically submitted Remote Order OR an [Infectious Disease Requisition form requesting enterovirus sequencing](#) should accompany all specimens, noting: symptoms, polio immunization history, and Rockland, Orange, Sullivan, or Nassau County connection.

- Please ship specimens to:

**David Axelrod Institute  
Virology Laboratory  
Wadsworth Center  
New York State Dept. of Health  
120 New Scotland Ave.  
Albany, NY 12208**

## **Questions**

- Questions regarding submission of specimens to Wadsworth Center can be directed to [wcid@health.ny.gov](mailto:wcid@health.ny.gov).
- Questions pertaining to enrollment to CLIMS for access to remote ordering and access to electronic test reports can be directed to [climsoutreach@health.ny.gov](mailto:climsoutreach@health.ny.gov).
- General questions about suspected polio cases or suspected AFM cases can be directed to the NYSDOH BCDC at 1-866-881-2809 evenings, weekends, and holidays or by email at [AFM@health.ny.gov](mailto:AFM@health.ny.gov) or [BCDC@health.ny.gov](mailto:BCDC@health.ny.gov). In New York City clinicians may contact the healthcare provider access line at 1-866-692-3641